EDMODO: A Social Learning Platform
For Blended Learning Class in Higher Education

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Abstract

Social networking in the internet offers many new incredible facilities and new ways of communication among people. Many online communities were built to facilitate people to share ideas, experiences, stories, etc. Nowadays, the idea of social networking has expanded to the area of education. Teachers and students start using social media to facilitate the teaching learning process. One of the widely used social networking website for educational purpose is Edmodo. In this study, the use of Edmodo in a blended learning course for non-English department students at Indonesia Education University will be examined. This study will also look at the students' perception towards the utilization of Edmodo for their learning process. Edmodo as a social learning platform was utilized to facilitate teachers and students to blend face to face and online interaction. Using Blended Learning model, the teacher combined some practical activities in the classroom with extended activities and project works in the virtual class. Forty students taking General English course were involved in this study. Observation and questionnaire were used to collect data regarding the use of Edmodo in assisting students learning process. The result shows that students have positive impression towards the use of Edmodo and feel comfortable of having online interaction with friends and teacher.

Keywords: *blended learning, Edmodo, Social Learning Platform*

1. INTRODUCTION

For most of non-English department students, English class is only scheduled at the first semester in the curriculum, comprising two credit semester which is similar to ninty minutes of classroom activity per week. Considering that there are sixteen meetings per semester, students only have twenty four hours of English lesson during their study. Those who do not take any extra English class outside the campus usually have poor English proficiency level upon graduated from the university. The fact that students need to be proficient in English combined with the available curriculum, place a great demand for English teachers to appropriately make use of the limited time. Pedagogical approaches and teaching strategy need to be manipulated to make sure that students can get enough exposure to English and fully maximize the impact of the time allocated for English teaching.

Besides the issue of the limitation of time, large number of students in one class has also been issue for some schools and universities. Teachers and students do not have sufficient opportunities to interact and communicate in the English class. One of the possible attempts that can be done is by creating the extension to face to face interaction outside the classroom.

In this case, the technology advancement can be utilized to provide motivating and engaging media-rich and interactive content to students. As far as learning is regarded as a socially and culturally mediated process influenced by interaction between participants, technology has more to offer than merely serves as the medium of instruction. Owing to its distinctive features that make it possible for interactions among individuals across different social and cultural context, technology-embedded instruction is likely to influence higher levels of thinking, such as problem solving, reasoning, critical thinking, reflection, etc. Technology integration in learning process provides a different way and intensity as compared to instruction deprived of technology.

Internet and technology offer many web-based learning platforms that can support the teaching learning process outside the classroom. If teachers appropriately employed ICTs, such as choosing the right website, making use of social network, using web-based applications, etc., they can benefit the learners by promoting their self-regulated learning in a number of ways. Having access to language-related resources and tools available through ICTs, the learners can choose and work with materials in line with their preferences and goals at any time and from any places. They can look for language learning materials and experiences which are appropriate and well-suited for their own needs and preferences. Thus ICTs can sustain the learners' interest and enthusiasm in learning the language and increase the enjoyment and emotional engagement of the learners. Also, ICTs can enhance social interaction and collaboration by connecting the learners with their peers, their teacher and even the community outside the class.

Among the myriad of choices, Edmodo has become one of the most widely-used social learning platform by educators, offering many features that enable different mode of interaction and activities virtually. This virtual class can be accesible by students at their own time and pace allowing students to get more time to catch up with the materials. By using Edmodo as the extension of the face to face interaction, it is expected that students can improve their English proficiency in a provided length of time, since it will increase the contact hours among students and teachers and facilitate peer feedback among students, which may create a productive learning environment for them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Blended Learning

Blended learning is commonly recognized as a combination of face to face teaching interaction with computer technology. Neumeier (2005) defines blended learning as a combination of face to face (FtF) and computer assisted learning (CAL) in a single teaching and learning environment. Similarly, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) define blended learning as a mixture of online and face to face course delivery. They also postulated that in some situation the digital elements done offline with a CD ROM. In line with Dudeney and Hockly, Sharma and

Barret (2007) refer blended learning to a language course which combines a face to face (F2F) classroom component with an appropriate use of technology. The above-mentioned definition of blended learning have similarity except they use different term when referring to technology, such as computer assisted learning, online and technology itself.

Hockly (2011) provides three reasons of implementing blended learning in higher education,

- Learners'expectations – learners nowadays expect technologytobe integrated into their language classes, (although I believe this to be highly context dependent).
- Flexibility–learners expect to be able to fit learning into their busy lives, especially professional adults and university students.
- Ministry of Education (or similar) directives – in some contexts teachers are expected to offer blended learning options.

Blended Learning provides ample opportunity to create a learning experience for the students at the right time and place, anytime and anywhere. Students are not only able to access learning materials in school/college, but they also can access it at home, as well as other places. Blended learning can be a model of learning that is unlimited and universal that can bring a group of students into independent learners. In this case, blended learning can be one of the milestones in the development of 21st century education (Thorne, 2003).

2.2. Edmodo as a Social Learning Network

Edmodo is a social network which is especially dedicated for learning purpose. The interface of this web 2.0 application is similar to that of Facebook with additional features that can enhance students learning process. Edmodo has become a popular learning platform and being integrated as alternative learning environment in elementary and secondary schools and even in universities due to its functionality, ease of use and cross-platform simplicity (Hourdequin:2014). Through Edmodo, teacher and students can get connected, share and discuss text, images, audio and video. Students can do some independent learning by doing quizzes, working on assignments, getting involved in discussion forums, checking grades, getting feedback from teachers and peers, sharing and collaborating ideas, etc. Cauley (2013) stated that by using Edmodo, cyber bullying and inappropriate content due to its level of transparency in which teachers and parents can see everything posted in it.

Integrating Edmodo in learning process does not demand the school to have a computer lab or provide laptops in the classroom as Edmodo can be used as the supplement to teaching learning process and allow teachers to improve the amount of communication with the students outside the class (Cauley, 2013). In addition, Cauley stated that by providing more opportunity to communicate with students, it will decrease confusion, improve better work and give more time to engage and focus on the higher level essentials questions.

Today's students are the 21st century learners who deal a lot with the social media. As a social networking site, Edmodo provides the students with the joyful of using social media dedicated for their learning purpose only. As postulated by Scott (2012), Edmodo is a tool that marries the benefits of social networking with a safe, controlled environment that educators can allow students to freely operate in. Students can access Edmodo via web browser or IOs and Android Application on their Smartphone or tablet. In this manner, students can get immediate notification from any activities and or announcements posted in Edmodo as long as they are connected to the internet.

Edmodo classes are created by teachers for specific groups of students; teachers can even create smaller groups inside the main group allowing them to deliver differentiated instruction on individual or group bases. Having created the group, teachers then share the group code to the students. Using the group code, students can simply sign up to Edmodo without having to enter their email addresses and other personal information. This can make sure the security of this platform either for younger students or for adults do to some concerns relating to publishing personal information on the internet (Hourdequin: 2014). Teacher and students as the member of Edmodo group have the right to post notes (In the form of text, web link, image, audio and video) or response to others' note (from teacher or peers). The slight difference between teachers and students is that teacher can post note to individual, small group or the entire main group, but students are not allowed to post note to individual due to the fact that teachers should be able to see any notes posted by any member of the group (Edmodo: 2013)

2.3. Edmodo in Blended Learning Environment

In relation to Blended Learning environment, Edmodo is utilized as the place for online learning interaction in addition to the face to face interaction. Edmodo supports the four major features of an online learning environment as proposed by Anderson (2008) among others are: Learner-Centered, Knowledge-Centered, Community-Centered and Assessment-Centered. Candelaria & Wernicke (2013) explained how Edmodo meets this online learning environment features:

- Learner Centered: Edmodo provides comfortable space for students to share their understanding and knowledge that they can bring to the community of a learning environment. This can create and help students to get an in depth understanding of some issues in the content knowledge areas as they communicate through posts in Edmodo.
- Community Centered: Edmodo plays a role as a learning community center where students can learn as a group and make connection with resources as well as peers and teachers through virtual communication.
- Knowledge Centered: Edmodo provides space for students to exchange information with other member of the group and become both expert and learners in their learning process.

- Assessment Centered: Edmodo provides space for both formative and summative assessment in either formal or informal way. Students can get feedback from their teacher or peers and also learn from each other mistakes. (Candelaria & Wernicke: 2013)

3. METHODOLOGY

The course of English as a foreign language as applicable in Indonesian context is aimed at gaining basic communication skills of English in everyday situation. Students often fail to achieve the desired level of proficiency due to several reasons among others are lack of confidence, insufficient exposure to the target language and limited time to practice the language. This course was conducted using blended learning mode, in which the face to face interaction was blended with the online interaction using Edmodo to increase the amount of interaction among teacher and students as well as students and students. In the light of the benefits of Edmodo as a social learning network platform, this study will examine the implementation of using Edmodo in a blended learning course and also look at the students' perception towards the utilization of Edmodo for their learning process.

3.1. The Subject
A class consist of forty students were participated in this study. Their age range are around 18-20 years old. The students are first semester under graduate students at Indonesia Education University from Purwakarta Campus with English proficiency ranging from elementary to pre-intermediate level. These students are from The Faculty of Education majoring in Elementary School Teacher Education.

3.2. Data Collection
A questionnaire was set using Google form to find out the participants' view and experiences toward the use of Edmodo as social learning platform and survey on the participants' responses towards the blended learning teaching practice. The response to this questionnaire was anonymous and done individually online, to avoid the possibility of students try to please the teacher or gain good mark. In addition, an open-ended interviews with the participants were also conducted to obtain a more in-depth analysis of the findings.

3.3. The Course
The course is offered to the first semester students. Using Blended Learning model, the teacher combined some practical activities in the classroom with extended activities in the virtual class. Six sessions of this blended learning course was dedicated for the purpose of this research. A video presentation project was assigned to the students to be finished by week six. The class meets 100 minutes per week with additional activities, tasks and assignment in Edmodo which can be done either individually or in group. Each week students discussed

different topics both in face to face and online class. The topics are "Personal Identity", "Physical Description", "Personality" and "Celebrities and Their Achievement". Each topic scaffold the students' knowledge and skills and led them to completing the final project.

4. BLENDING FACE TO FACE AND EDMODO INTERACTION

The first week was started by the introduction to the blended learning interaction, the orientation to the use of Edmodo and a short explanation on the final project about a video profile of a famous person which should be done by week 6. Students were introduced to the features of Edmodo such as Notes, Assignment Submission, Library, Backpack, etc. It was also discussed that Edmodo will be used as a special space for communication and collaboration among Lecturers and students. Students were given time to create new account, explore the platform and try out posting in the group wall.

On the second week, the blended learning model started to be implemented. Discussing about personal identity, students were engaged in a discussion about things they would like to find out from a person they hardly know, read passages on related topics and ended by doing a short interview with friends. On Edmodo, students were asked to post their self-introduction and give comments to their friends' posts. The following week was continued by the topic on describing people. Prior to the face to face meeting, students were asked to watch videos and do some online quizzes on Edmodo in order to gain some prior knowledge on topic to be discussed in the class and obtain some vocabulary related to the topic. The face to face meeting was optimized for the students to practice their communication skills by working in group and orally describe people's physical description. The discussion on this topic was still continued in Edmodo by doing group guessing games – one group posted a physical description of a famous person, and then the others should guess the intended person.

The fourth topic was about people's personality. Before the face to face meeting, students were asked to watch another video about people describing their friends' personality, which was then continued by answering questions on online quizzes. In the face to face meeting, after getting familiar with the vocabulary and expressions related to personality, students were asked to work in group and create a set of questionnaire to be able to guess their friends' personality. Having finished creating the questionnaire, different groups were paired and asked to interview each other based on the questionnaire. At the end of the meeting, students were asked to analyze their friends' personality based on the questionnaire, and post the result on Edmodo. They were encouraged to discuss and comments to each other's posts.

The last topic was Famous People and Their Achievement. In Edmodo they were given some suggested website links to search information about their favorite famous person. They were suggested to find out the personal identity, physical description, personality, and achievement of

those famous people. In the face to face meeting, they brought all the information and share them with their group. Then, they were asked to create a mind map to make a summary of information about the famous person that they have chosen. This mind map was intended to be used as guidance to their final project, together with the information that they have compiled. Students were given one week to finish the final project which were then posted on You Tube and shared on Edmodo to be commented by other groups. The scheme of the blended learning model is described in Figure 1.
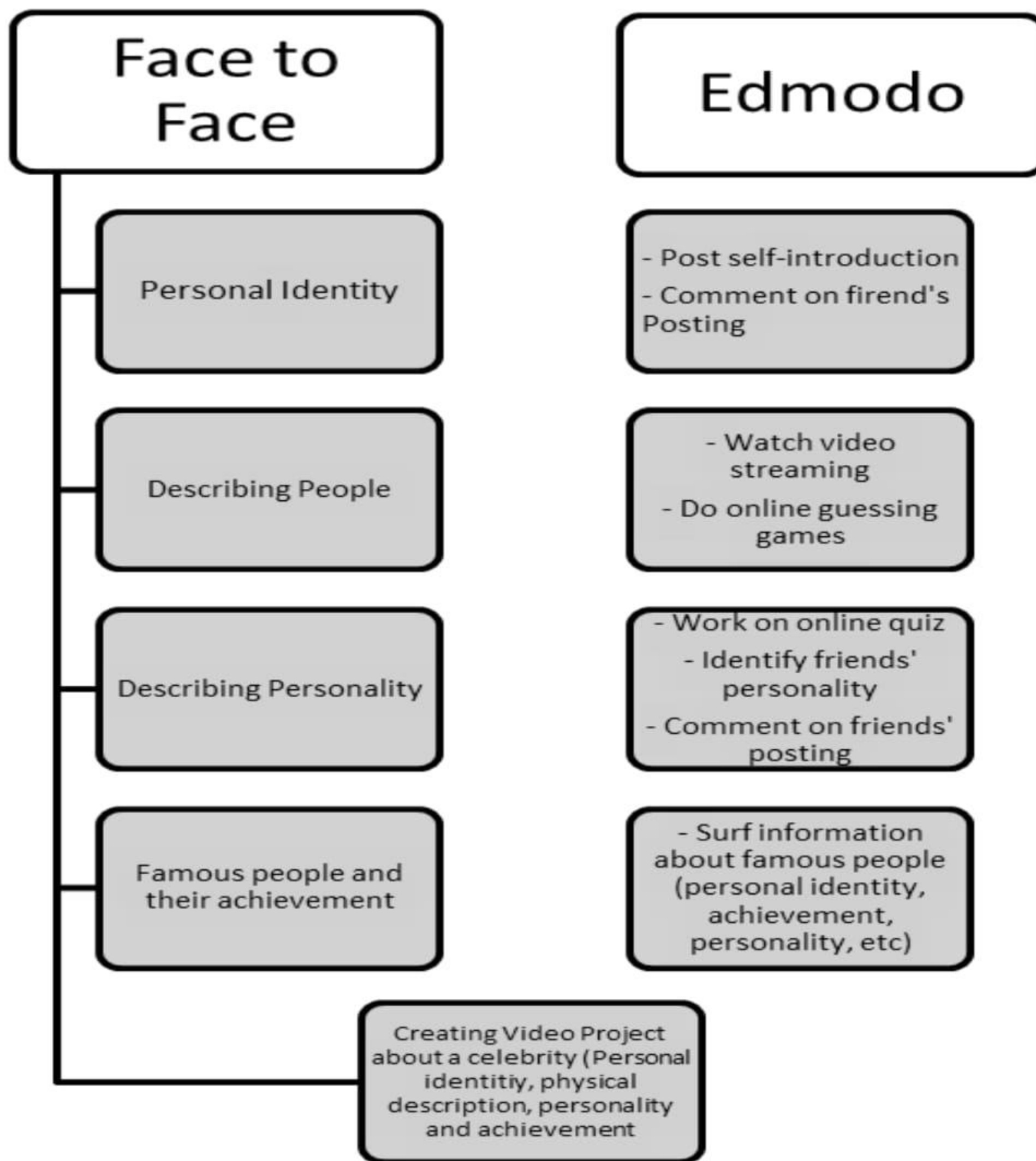
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┌──────────────┐                    ┌──────────────┐
│  Face to     │                    │   Edmodo     │
│   Face       │                    │              │
└──────────────┘                    └──────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Personal Identity│              │ - Post self-introduction│
│                  │              │ - Comment on firend's│
│                  │              │   Posting            │
└──────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Describing People│              │ - Watch video        │
│                  │              │   streaming          │
│                  │              │ - Do online guessing │
│                  │              │   games              │
└──────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────┐            ┌──────────────────────┐
│Describing Personality│          │ - Work on online quiz│
│                    │            │ - Identify friends'  │
│                    │            │   personality        │
│                    │            │ - Comment on friends'│
│                    │            │   posting            │
└────────────────────┘            └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Famous people and│              │ - Surf information   │
│ their achievement│              │ about famous people  │
│                  │              │ (personal identity,  │
│                  │              │ achievement,         │
│                  │              │ personality, etc)    │
└──────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘

              ┌──────────────────────┐
              │ Creating Video Project│
              │ about a celebrity (Personal│
              │ identitiy, physical  │
              │ description, personality│
              │ and achievement      │
              └──────────────────────┘
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Figure 1: Weekly face to face and Edmodo interaction

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion will be divided into three parts, the first one is the students' general impression to the use of Edmodo before and after the implementation, the second is the activities conducted in Edmodo, and the last one is the ease of use of Edmodo.

5.1. Impression before and after using Edmodo

As indicated in Figure 2, the survey result shows that none of the students strongly agree that they have positive impression to Edmodo at the beginning of the implementation. This probably because Edmodo is still new for them and they have no experiences in learning in a blended learning mode. Therefore, they do not have enough assurance about how helpful Edmodo can be for assisting their learning. There are 20 out of 40 students who agree to have positive impression to Edmodo, 15 students were neutral and 5 students slightly disagree to have positive impression to Edmodo.

However, after the implementation of Edmodo, students responded more positively, there are 7 students strongly agree that they like using Edmodo, while 25 of them agree to the statements, 5 students are neutral and there were 3 students who slightly disagree to the statement that they like using Edmodo. In response to English proficiency improvement, 18 students agree that Edmodo has helped them improved their proficiency while 19 said neutral and 3 students slightly disagree to the statement.
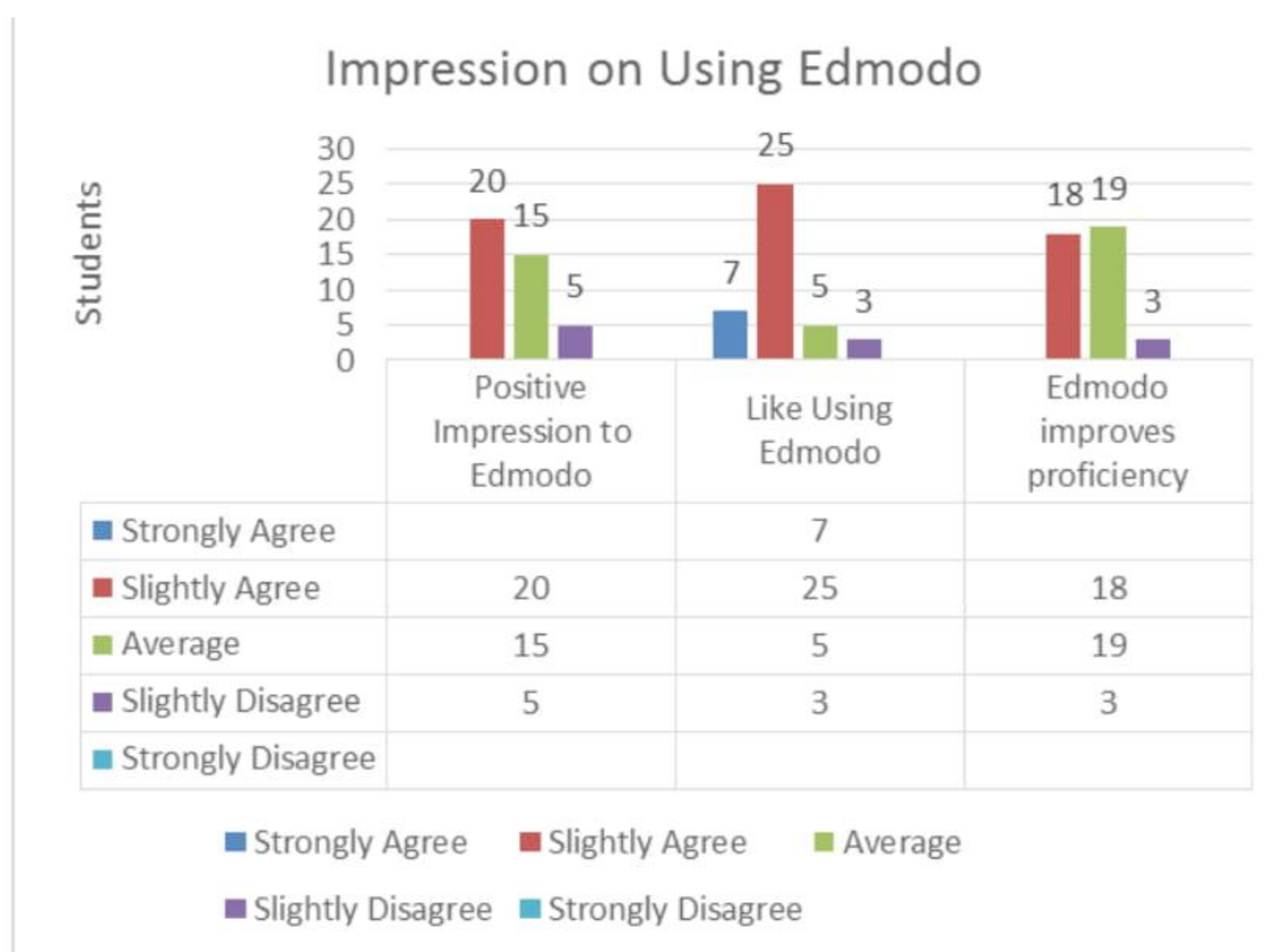

	Positive Impression to Edmodo	Like Using Edmodo	Edmodo improves proficiency
■ Strongly Agree		7	
■ Slightly Agree	20	25	18
■ Average	15	5	19
■ Slightly Disagree	5	3	3
■ Strongly Disagree			

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Slightly Agree   ■ Average
■ Slightly Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 2: Perception on Using Edmodo

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Throughout the implementation process, it can be seen that majority of the students were fully engaged in both face to face and online activities. The weekly topics which were specially designed to be simultaneously connected to each other make the learning process become seamless. The unfinished discussion in face to face interaction were brought into online discussion, the heated online discussion were raised in the classroom. Most of the material were taken from the authentic resources and carefully graded to guide them in working on the final project. In this manner, students can feel the comfortable non-conventional learning atmosphere which was authentic and real.

A small number of students who still have negative perception towards the use of Edmodo are those whose English proficiency are in the pre-elementary level. They have difficulties in understanding the materials and instruction which was delivered in English. Furthermore, these students also have limited access to internet. Thus, they found it difficult and challenging to catch up with the course material and discussion.

5.2. Activities on Edmodo

The students' responses toward the activities conducted in Edmodo can be seen in Figure 3. In regards to the activities on Edmodo more than 50% of the students strongly agree that Edmodo provided relevant and interesting links for them to study. This could be resulted in a half of the class who were willing to spend more time to study using Edmodo.
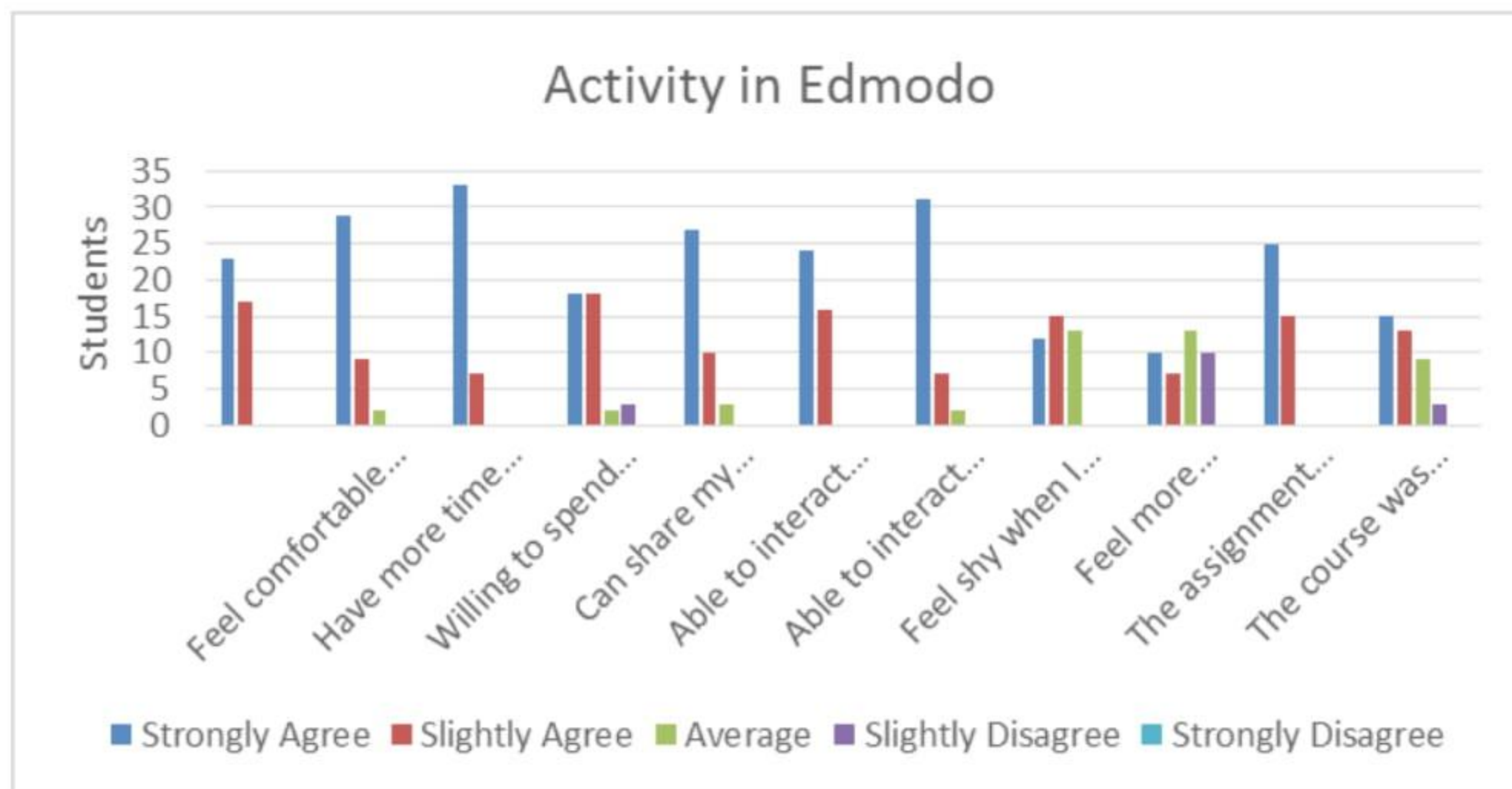

Figure 3: Activity in Edmodo

The result of the interview was in line with this survey. Here are some of the excerpts from the interview:

"I Like Edmodo because I can learn English before attending the class"

"Edmodo is an interesting Virtual Class. This is the first time I study English using VC"

Those statements show how Edmodo have attracted the students to learn English, because it provided the materials that will equip them when learning in the face to face class. The new learning environment has also provided a more motivational situation for the students.

In terms of interaction with friends and lecturer, more than 25 students strongly agree that they feel comfortable interacting with friends in Edmodo, they can share their ideas with friends and interact with lecturer. Whereas majority of the students strongly agree that by using Edmodo, they have more time to think before they responded to posts in Edmodo. These two aspects were influenced by the asynchronous mode of communication in Edmodo. Shy and unconfident students might feel comfortable to communicate Edmodo, due to the fact they do not face the nervousness of speaking in front of the class or being watched by friends and teacher while expressing their ideas. They have opportunities to search information to back them up before they post things in Edmodo and also have time to formulate what they need to post.

Correspondingly, the result of the interview shows a profound respond toward the use of Edmodo, as quoted below.

"I am interested in Edmodo because I can share things with the other class and find out how other classes study English"

"I can have more time in doing the assignment"

"By using Edmodo, I have more confident to speak and write in English"

Obviously, students like the features of Edmodo in which they can share ideas and comments with friends and lecturers while learning from others at the same time. Having the ability to have more time in doing assignments and giving responses, students can independently construct their knowledge and improve their language fluency. Therefore, students have more confident to give response both in written form and also orally in the face to face interaction.

Online videos, texts and quizzes provided in Edmodo prior to the face to face meeting were aimed to equip students with enough exposure of real context. Given that, the face to face meeting can be optimized for giving the students opportunities to practice the language with their friends and get feedback from the teacher.

In spite of the fact that most of students feel comfortable with this mode of learning, several students think that face to face interaction is more suitable for them as they feel easier to

communicate orally than in written form. Here is one of the excerpts from the result of the interview.

> *"I prefer face to face to Edmodo. Because I feel more comfortable talking to people while looking at their face"*

5.3. Ease of Use of Edmodo

As described in Figure 4, in regards to the ease of use of Edmodo, more than 25 students strongly agree that the button and navigation in Edmodo are clear and easy to understand. The interface of Edmodo which is similar to Facebook is very familiar for them as active social media users. Most of the students also think that they have no technical problem in doing the exercises and assignment in Edmodo. However, most of the problems are related to the slow internet connection which hinders them from accessing the website.
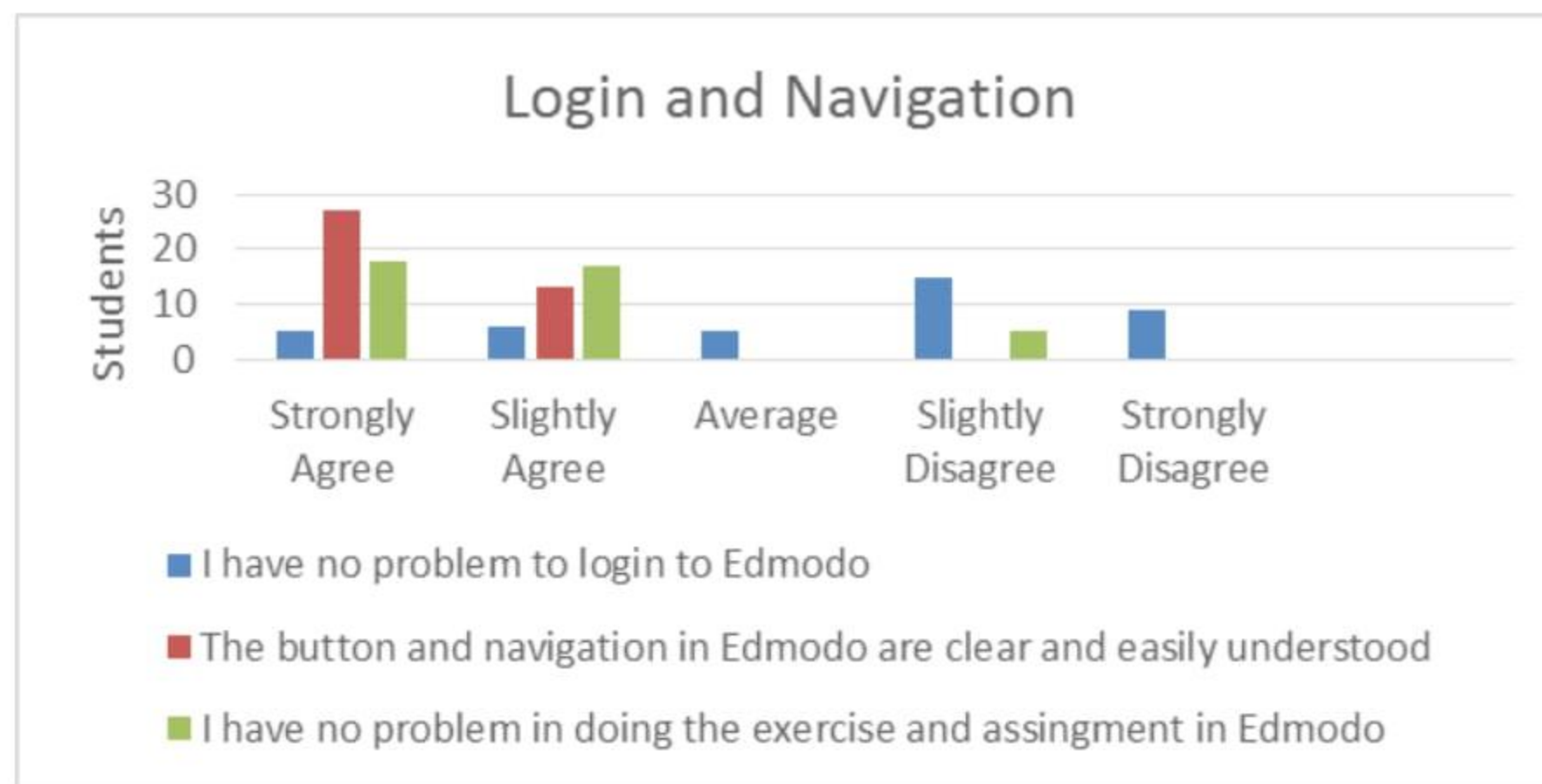

Figure 4. Ease of Use of Edmodo

The result of the interview is in accordance with the survey. Students explained that even though they enjoy learning through edmodo, they have problem to access it due to the fact that they do not have laptops or computers and have difficulties to access the internet. Here are some excperts from the interview:

> *"I like using Edmodo, but I have difficulty to go online. I have no facilities"*

> *"I don't have laptop and modem, using Edmodo is difficult"*

> *"I am not a tech-savvy person, so I often find difficulties with Edmodo"*

Some students also complained about the weekly assignment and discussion which was posted online. They think that it was overwhelming for them, as they also have to deal with assignments from other subjects. Moreover, lack of computer literacy is also a problem for some of the students.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings show that participants had positive atitudes toward the virtual class and they also show their satisfaction with the online collaboration using Edmodo. They reported that it gave them more exposure to English and gave more opportunities to practice and interact with their peers and teacher. The findings also indicated that the asynchronous discussions have given more time for the students to think of how to express their opinion, yet, still actively engaged in the discussions and collaborate with partners.

However, getting connected to the internet seemed to be the main problem faced by the students. Teacher as content developer needs to create interesting and interactive Virtual Class that promote interaction and collaboration. Teacher needs to simplify the instruction used in the virtual class. Teacher needs to keep finding ways of encouraging more social interaction in the target language.

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